

Appendix 4 – Common Questions asked by Mothers

Is hand expressing difficult?

Hand expressing is easy to learn and will get easier with practice

Success comes with practice. Follow the instructions on hand expressing in the booklet “Off to the best start”.

Can I use a pump instead?

Hand expressing is more effective than a pump during pregnancy and for the first 24 hours after delivery. As you will only express small amounts, using a pump may cause you to lose some of that precious colostrum.

When can I start expressing?

Colostrum can be saved from 37 weeks of pregnancy. Discuss with the midwife if you are at an earlier gestation and need to express.

How often do I need to express?

You can express up to three times in the same day. You won't trigger labour provided you express for a few minutes three times per day, unless you are already at risk of early labour. Start with 3-5 minutes on each breast for a total of 5-10 minutes.

How much colostrum will I express?

This varies from mother to mother. It may not seem a lot but a baby's first feed is not more than a teaspoon in the first 24 hours so every drop expressed is precious (liquid gold). Save all expressed colostrums, no matter how small.

If I cannot express any milk does this mean I have no milk?

Not all mothers leak colostrum. Do not worry if no colostrum is expressed (it may be the technique) this does not mean that you will not produce milk or breastfeed successfully.

How do I collect and freeze the expressed milk?

You can express directly into a sterile container or use a syringe to draw up the colostrum. Place the expressed colostrum in the coldest part of the fridge. Once you have expressed for the last time that day, label and date the syringe before putting it in the freezer. You can store all the syringes together in a box or a sealed zipped bag.

How long can colostrum be safely refrigerated?

It can be safely refrigerated up to 48 hours but ideally freeze as soon as possible after the 3rd expression or within (24 hours).

When do I take the colostrum with me to the hospital?

When you come into hospital, please bring any labelled frozen colostrum/milk with you between freezer blocks in a cool bag. On admission ask the staff to store your frozen colostrum immediately in the freezer on Dinefwr Ward so it does not defrost.

For more information on breastfeeding and the diabetic mother La Leche League have produced an excellent leaflet:

“The Diabetic Mother and Breastfeeding” current cost £2.50.